

Secrets for Quickly Building a Massive, Responsive Email List

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Robert Middleton and Bob Serling

Robert: Welcome everyone. This is Robert Middleton at Action Plan Marketing and today, I am joined by Bob Serling of Consulting Success. Today we are going to talk about how to quickly build a massive, responsive email list.

In just a minute, we will introduce Bob and talk a little bit about him, but I want to introduce myself first. Many people have subscribed to my email newsletter *More Clients* and some of you have bought products online such as “The InfoGuru Manual.”

I have been in business since 1984 but really when things started to take off in my business was in 1996, 1997 when I created a website and an email newsletter. I put a tremendous amount of time, effort and focus on how to build a list because I just felt that was key to marketing myself.

Before having an email list, I had a regular snail mail list and I did postcard mailings, newsletters mailings and other mailings that were always very effective marketing tools for me. Then I started my eZine and I realized that I could reach more people for a lot less money, a lot more efficiently than I ever could with my newsletter.

So, I dropped the snail mail newsletter after a number of months and kept doing email. And over the years, my list has grown now to over 30,000 people, going out to people in almost every single country of the world. It generates a lot of business for me and a lot of online sales.

Most of the people on this call will be more concerned about using e-lists to generate business for their consulting, coaching, training or whatever other service they have. But, some people also might be interested in selling products online. Everything today is going to be

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focused around building that list, tips, ideas, and strategies.

We are going to do our level best to be as practical and hands-on as possible. Being it is such a big subject, we could literally spend a day on this, maybe a week but we are really going to focus in on the top, most important things. So, take good notes and as we go, remember your questions. We will be answering questions in the last fifteen minutes of the teleclass.

As we said, it is going to go for 75 minutes.

So, Bob, why don't you tell us a little bit about you and your experience in building a list and starting online.

Bob: Alright. A little background, I own a company called Consulting Success. I help primarily consultants, trainers and corporate coaches to market and sell their services more effectively.

Prior to working just with consultants, trainers and coaches, I was more of a generalized marketing consultant specializing in direct marketing. I've been doing this since 1983 and got into online marketing very early on. I have to completely echo what Robert said in that I quickly discovered the power of a list, an eZine list to get my message across and to establish relationships with prospects who eventually became customers.

Now, this wasn't really a surprise to me, because coming from direct marketing there's an old adage that the list is everything. The quality of the people you have on your customer list, the quality of other prospecting lists that you can find make all the difference in the world.

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The best product, the best service, the best website, whatever, communicating with the wrong list will do nothing. But, the right list will really help you. As I said, I totally agree with Robert on the critical importance of having a very strong, very effective email marketing list.

Robert: Something that I've often said, Bob, is that the most important asset that I have in my business is my list. It really is the most important thing and some people don't have a list at all. Essentially, you have no momentum in your marketing without a list because you can't contact people.

One of the key marketing principles that I go into in "The InfoGuru Marketing" is the importance of "Keep-in-Touch Marketing." People see you, meet you, hear about you, connect with you, visit your website... but people have a short attention span and many other things are vying for their attention.

If you don't keep your message in front of them in some way or other, on a regular basis, people just forget you – nothing personal. You might have the greatest services in the world, but keeping in touch really is the key. If you don't have a great list, you can't really create a lot of momentum.

Why don't we get into some of the specific things about a list, and there may be some things that we miss out on. Hopefully we'll catch up with those during the question period. The first area I want to talk about, briefly, is how to set-up a mailing list for maximum results.

When I first started, I sent out email from my desktop as I collected email. I put it in a database and filtered it into my email program and then sent it all out to everybody. More and more these days, that really doesn't work.

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You are more likely to have problems with Spam filters in your ISP not allowing you to send out more than few emails at a time, that kind of thing. It's a good idea to have an email list management system that resides online, usually on someone else's server, so that when you get a subscriber it goes into the list automatically. And, it builds automatically.

When you send email out, if there is a problem or the particular mail address isn't there anymore, it will bounce and then it will get eliminated from the list.

So, all of the management functions, for the most part, are automatic. It doesn't take you very much time or effort to manage your list anymore. The one that I've recommended many, many times is called www.AWeber.com.

By the way, we're going to be supplying you with a *Resource List* with a number of links of various resources at the end of the teleclass. All of these will be in the list.

I'm not going to go into how to use AWeber and all the ins and outs. You go, you sign up, you set-up a simple form for your website. People put in their name and email address and automatically, they are subscribed. The list grows like that.

You can go on anytime and see how many subscribers you have and manage the things that you are sending out. You just want to get that set-up as soon as possible. If you have a list of 500 to 1,000 on your database, ultimately, you're going to have to transfer them into Aweber.

You'll discover that they won't let you just bulk put in 1,000 email addresses because they are afraid of people

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spamming. You have to get permission for every single one. So, the sooner you get set-up with AWeber , or another system, the better.

Any other comments from you about email list systems, Bob?

Bob: Yes. I agree. You absolutely want a web-based email system. That is where a web-based server is sending your email out rather than doing your own. I had the unfortunate experience, very early on five or six years ago, trying to send out 6,000 to 7,000 emails to my eZine list and getting irate calls from my ISP because I was clogging the mail server.

The other thing is, as you said, we're not going to go into the details of setting up a list because it is so simple. Any email list offer you sign up for will give you a tutorial. You can learn all the ins and outs in basically 15 to 30 minutes.

Now, AWeber is very highly recommended. A lot of people use it. I use something that is even simpler. It is very inexpensive. It costs only a one-time fee of \$25.00. It's called [Dada Mail](#). Robert will give you the link.

The thing I like about Dada Mail is its extreme simplicity. You can import huge lists into Dada Mail, which is one thing I liked because I had a very large list and I wanted to move it over. It offers all the features of double opt-in and being able to manage your list very effectively.

You can send messages to your list, quickly and easily. It takes two clicks to do so. I think the basic premise that I want people to understand is that you want web-based email list software. Besides AWeber and Dada Mail, there are dozens of others.

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Robert Like Constant Contact and Get Response. There are a lot of them.

Bob: Yes. Just make sure, before you use anything that you get a lot of references and talk to people. Ask them what the strengths are and what the weaknesses are. Make sure those fit with what your needs are.

Robert: Let's move on to the next one. Let's say you've got your list set-up. You may have a few or virtually no emails in your database, yet.

The first question is where do you get your first subscribers?

What a lot of people focus on is getting subscribers from the web. They get on search engines and do a thing called co-registration, which we'll mention briefly later on. We think because it's web-oriented and Internet-oriented everything should come from the web.

I'm here to tell you that nothing could be further from the truth, especially at the beginning. I led a workshop, earlier this year, and I asked people where they'd found out about me. Everyone was on my email list, of course, because that's the only way I promote my seminars.

Everyone had found out about me from someone else. So, even though they were on the list, it was very much word-of-mouth. Even though it's an electronic medium and it's just an email and a name, people pass on an eZine or email.

They say, "This is a good one. You should check it out. I've been getting it for some time." So, really focusing on very interpersonal kinds of things, especially to begin with to build your list is very important.

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Now, the one I'm going to talk about, which I think is the most powerful, fastest way initially, is to do speaking engagements. You get emails for your eZine when you do speaking engagements. I'll give you some of the details of how I do that.

I can't go into all of the details of how to get speaking engagements. That's really not the topic. But, whether you have a group that's Chamber of Commerce of 20 to 30 people, or a professional group of 50, 60, or 75 people, or even a Kiwanis or Rotary group that has 20 to 30 people, if you do what I'm going to tell you to do, you'll get 75% to 90% of the email addresses from everyone attending your talk.

There's one little caveat – you have to give a good talk.

You can't just give a bad talk and expect they'll give you cards. They won't do anything. But, all things being equal, you give a good presentation. At the end of your presentation, this is what I've found to be the best script.

You have a report or a long article or some kind of giveaway printed that you're going to give away in exchange for the email address. Even if you are going to give this to them digitally, you print out a copy and bring it with you. At the end of the talk, you say:

“You know I mentioned a lot of things in the talk today. I've brought a handout here, a report on the ‘Ten Ways to Blah, Blah, and Blah’ and it covers a lot of the information that we covered today.”

Now, they may have gotten a handout with some sketchy things on it, but you need to hand them a 10 to 15 page report. Then you say these words:

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“Who would like to get a copy?”

Everybody puts their hands up because everybody likes to get free stuff. It’s just absolutely guaranteed. Then you say:

“This is how to get it. Please take out your business cards.”

Let people actually take them out, right then.

“Great. Now look on your card and make sure you have your correct email address on the card. If it’s not correct, please change it.”

Twenty percent or more of people don’t have the correct email address on their card, so they change it.

“Now, hand it up to me. I will send you a copy of this report in PDF and by email. I’ll also add you to my regular email newsletter list. Of course, if you don’t want to stay on the list you can unsubscribe anytime. But, I need your email address to send you the report.”

After that, that’s the end of the talk. People will rush the stage giving you their cards, 75% to 90%. So, it’s a great way to build business, just in general. But, if you go to do a lot of speaking engagements and you’re not getting cards and email addresses, you’re spinning your wheels.

So, one of your main objectives is to get email addresses. Get them on the list. Now, there are other things you might do to follow-up with people, but we’re not going to cover that today. But, that’s what you want to do.

Any comments about that? What are some of your ideas for getting addresses offline, Bob?

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Bob: I agree that speaking is a great way because you immediately establish credibility with people. However, let me give you the flip side of that. I don't speak much in public. I speak probably only twice a year. I try to target only large conventions when I do that. This is primarily because I don't enjoy all the travel. I don't enjoy being on the road. I love to travel for pleasure. But, I can't stand being hung up for days.

Robert: I'm not big on that, as well. Of course, I'm thinking more local speaking engagements, but go on.

Bob: What I use are offline methods that are very different. I use two primarily. I use postcard mailings that do use the same techniques that Robert mentioned, but in a different media. I use postcards to offer a free package of the material to members of Trade Associations.

So, let's say that you're a consultant in Chemical Engineering. There's got to be half a dozen large chemical engineering associations. You can get the list of those people and you send out postcards.

On my site, www.consulting-success.com, I have what's called "The Free Service Marketing Toolkit." That toolkit is comprised of a report, a calculator that shows you how effectively you are marketing, and a free subscription to my eZine.

Robert: We'll put a link to that in the *Resource Guide*, as well.

Bob: Great. I send out postcards telling the members of these associations the value of that. Now, I get between 30% to 40% of the people to whom I mail to sign up.

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Robert: Twenty-four to forty percent in Direct Mail is incredibly high.

Bob: It is, but of course, anytime you are giving away something for free and the better you've targeted your market, the better your percentage of conversion is going to be. But, again, compare that. If you are speaking, you are going to get 70% to 95%. There is a drop-off when you are mailing; however, there is a savings in time.

The other thing I use extensively is joint ventures. This is where I will take a product of mine and do an agreement with another company to offer my product to their customer list. In exchange, they get 50% of the profits.

Two things happen. A number of those customers will purchase the product, but two to three times as many of them will go to the site, look at the product, and sign-up for my Service Marketing Toolkit, at that time. So, that's a way to really get paid, and sometimes get paid handsomely, for adding more subscribers to your list.

Last year, I did a joint venture with a company. We offered one of my products to their list. I got 1,200 subscribers from that offer. We then turned around and offered their product to my list. My list was smaller. But, they got over 700 subscribers and we both made a few thousand dollars, to boot. Those are two very simple methods that are very effective.

Robert: Another way to think of this on a slightly smaller scale, perhaps, especially for people beginning, is the subject of my eZine today, *More Clients*, the August 10th edition. In it, I talk about virtual speaking engagements. In the same way that you can give a live speaking engagement, you can give a virtual speaking engagement.

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A good example is someone that met me through a seminar, said, "Would you give a teleclass to our group?" There was not a huge number. There were 80 people on the call. I gave a one-hour talk on the Seven Biggest Marketing Mistakes.

I didn't swap email lists with them. We simply gave them a special offer and said, "Go to my site, sign-up and get the free marketing plan workbook." When you do, you'll get a \$10 discount on the manual. Dozens of them went and signed up for the email list and got the free marketing workbook. Several of them bought the manual. So, without a lot of effort, I increased my list and I got some sales.

Any of that kind of exchange done virtually, is great. I'm going to be doing more and more of these teleclasses as a guest, because every time I do, I get a few dozen extra subscribers and the list grows.

Bob: Let me add one more method similar to the postcards. Not only do I mail postcards to the members of associations, but I will take a letter with that same message, personalize it and mail that to the Director of the association. I don't send them a press release. I send them a personal letter explaining the same benefits of the toolkit and asking them if they would be kind enough to mention it in their newsletter.

Now, I'm getting two exposures to that same group. They are getting my postcard and they are also seeing my Service Marketing Toolkit mentioned in the newsletter of the association they belong to.

Robert: What percentage of the time are they willing to publish you in the newsletter with that technique?

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Bob: I would say about 30%.

Robert: But that can reach thousands and thousands of people and get hundreds of new subscribers, couldn't it?

Bob: Particularly if you get a big association to do so, you can add 500 to 600 subscribers in a couple of days, very quickly. Sometimes big associations that have state chapters, the larger state chapter association will pick up your announcement. Then, it's just like hitting a slot machine. It's just spitting out those quarters for days on end.

Robert: That's very good. So, I hope this gives you some good ideas for offline. We'll be covering more online ways, later on. We want to move to a little bit about the eZine because you really can't separate your list from your eZine. It's like the front of the hand and the back of the hand.

How you structure your eZine, put it together, promote it, and get it passed on depends a lot on how you designed it, put it together, and the quality of it. If you are doing everything you can to get new subscribers and you don't have a good quality eZine in an appropriate format, no one is going to pass it on and no one is going to subscribe.

People will unsubscribe quickly and your net result is zero. The quality of your eZine is extraordinarily important.

Bob, why don't you start with this one? Talk a little bit about the structure of eZines, why that structure is effective and ultimately results in more subscribers.

Bob: Let me start with that from the backside. The primary thing eZines do for you is to establish your credibility with

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your audience. I recently completed a program called “The Ultimate Guide to Selling Professional Services Online.”

It features five different experts, including Robert. In doing so, I spoke to about 20 different experts before I narrowed it down to the five who are contributors.

Three trends showed up very strongly for three different formats for eZines that work very well. The first format is what I call “high value content by a single author.” Both Robert and I use that method.

If you look at my eZine or you look at Robert’s, you’ll see that it’s always written by us. We don’t have guest authors, guest articles, or a lot of little announcements. It’s a high-value content issue written by us with easy to digest information that you can use right away.

On the opposite spectrum, but also very effective, is what’s called the “digest mode.” Probably the best example of this that I can tell you to look at is an eZine called “*Web Digest for Marketers*.” Robert will be giving you the link for this. If you want to look at it today, it’s www.wdfm.com.

It’s like a Reader’s Digest of good web sites. In each issue, they give about a four sentence review of five to ten websites that are of value to marketers. They concentrate some special issues on topics like search engine marketing, direct marketing, or email marketing. Other issues are on broader topics. It’s a digest that is constantly giving people valuable information.

Larry Chase, the editor does consulting in online marketing and offline marketing, though primarily online. When people are getting this digest, that I believe comes

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out every two weeks, they are getting this great information and bookmarking it and they are thinking of Larry over and over and over. When they are ready to look for a consultant for online marketing services, the first person they are going to think of is Larry Chase.

The third format is what I call the “Hybrid” format which is a combination of little chunks of valuable information written by the editor and some digest-type industry announcements, details of websites you’ll find valuable, certain issues that are pertinent to the industry. Probably the two best advocates and publishers of those types of eZines are Bob Bly. You can see samples of his at www.bly.com.

The other is a guy named Joe Vitale. Now, Joe can be way out there, sometimes. He has some very wild marketing techniques; but he’s also a brilliant, kind of bread-and-butter marketer, as well. Joe’s site is www.mrfire.com. He has back issues of his eZine on his site.

Those are the three formats that really work well. I think equally important is that I really advise that you test different formats when you are first starting out. See what resonates most with your market.

Robert: Let me throw in a few things. You want high-quality, good information that is solidly written. You don’t want it too long. You don’t want a 10-page article. You want a one, two or maybe three at the most, page article.

The biggest reason for people unsubscribing to my eZine is they just don’t have time. I think a lot of people are concerned that there are too many eZines out there. It’s just not going to work. No one’s going to read it. Well, I’m living proof that’s absolutely not true.

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If you can put out good content in one or more of the formats that Bob talked about, you can be very successful with this. You have a particular target audience. You know that audience. You understand that audience.

By the way, one of the best variations on the theme of the first one, which is your own content, is doing case studies or stories about people that you've worked with. You simply say, "Recently, I was working with such-and-such client, and we realized this-and-this, and we did such-and-such and so-and-so."

You tell a story which is valuable to your subscribers because they've gone through exactly those sorts of things that you talk about. It also points to you, "He's the guy that's helping people like that."

I've found that when I get very personal and down to, "Here's something that I've worked with people on," people really resonate to that kind of thing.

One way to determine the best content for you is, believe it or not, to subscribe to a whole bunch of eZines. Everything that comes across, just subscribe to them. Have them filter into one folder so it doesn't overwhelm your Inbox.

Read them and notice what you like. At one place, you might say, "You know what, I really like this style." Maybe you like mine, Bob's or somebody else's.

You might say, "I think I'm going to emulate that style."

Then, just continue in that direction. Also, of course, if you have a good eZine with good content that's interesting, more people are going to pass it on. This is really proven when I send out my eZine on Tuesdays.

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I almost always get more subscribers by anywhere from 25% to 50% on Tuesdays. Why is that? It's because people have passed it on and more people are subscribing. They are not just finding me on the web through search engines.

Quality and content is key to this whole process. You'll notice in my eZine, I always do a little bit of promotion. I usually promote the "The InfoGuru Manual." I'll also promote teleclasses like this and other programs.

Bob, can you talk a little bit about the balance between promotion of your products and services in the eZine compared to editorial content?

Bob: Yes. This goes back to having talked to a lot of experts. I think everybody agrees that the ideal balance is that you want your eZine to be is heavy on content, whether that's digest, personal articles you've written, or a combination of both.

Anywhere from 10% to 20%, 30% at most, should be advertising. I err on the shorter side; and I err on the shorter side out of testing. I've tested longer portions of advertising. I've also tested shorter and medium. I find, for my personal eZine, that mentioning a couple of products that I offer in only about two sentences each with a link to them, is what's most effective.

This does a couple of things. It keeps the focus on your content which delivers the message that it's really a customer-centric eZine. It also takes up less space. People who are truly interested will then click and go read. The others can go buy it fairly quickly without slowing them down.

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My subscribers seem to appreciate that. Again, it's something that you have to test because other eZine publishers have found that longer pieces of advertising work more effectively for them.

Robert: For instance, I discovered that if I put more information about the "The InfoGuru Manual", as you'll see, at most, I have 13 points, and I've found when I had more points I sold more manuals. What can I tell you? Whereas, if I had less points, I sold less. More people clicked through. So, we've told you exactly opposite things, now. That's great for clarity, right Bob?

Bob: It really is, because the clarity issue is that you have to test. Different things work with different markets. Just to step back a half a step, I also do a lot of consulting in the area of product development, primarily toys and software.

I have an eZine for that group. With that group, longer copy in the advertising works better. You could wonder why for years to come, but it doesn't matter why. It's best that you find out what works and that's what you go with.

Robert: You are usually not trying to make the sale in the eZine. Whether it's long or short, you're directing them to a web page on your site which explains all about the service, the benefits, what it does, who's used it before, and how to order.

And also, for people that aren't selling online products, you can still have promotion about your particular services. You might have an introductory assessment. In the eZine, you talk about that.

For example, "Learn how an introductory assessment can help you do such-and-such and so-an-so. Click here for more details."

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It takes them to a page that has good, detailed and rich information on that assessment. Enough to have them call you or fill-in a form and respond. We're almost getting beyond the e-list thing, but these are important things to consider.

Bob: Let me interject a couple of things. What Robert just said is critical. You don't want to sell directly out of your eZine. You just don't have enough space. If you sell just services, if that's what you offer, then go to www.bly.com and look at the back issues of Bob Bly's eZine because that's all Bob offers. He's a direct response and high-tech copywriter.

Robert: Many people have heard of Bob because he's written many books on marketing for small businesses.

Bob: Yes. He has over 50 books published by all kinds of major presses including *The Idiot's Guide to Direct Marketing*, and dozens of others. If you go look at his eZine, you'll see how he offers his services and nothing else. So, whatever it is that you're offering, you can promote it in your eZine.

Robert: Right. Let's go on to another topic which is specific techniques and strategies to get people to pass-on the eZine to let their friends and associates know about it. There are a number of different things that you should do, other than just having a great eZine.

One is that the header of my eZine says, "Please feel free to pass this on to your friends." Let them know. Some people have sent me an email saying, "Can I let other people have this?" And, of course, they can. Ultimately some of those will subscribe.

The thing that I want to focus on a bit here is campaigns to your existing subscribers that will actually result in a

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lot of new subscribers. One thing I did earlier on in my eZine was to write a very special report. I took a book, abstracted it, and went into details on a particular area of marketing. I thought it was really valuable and something that wasn't available anywhere else.

I put out an email to my list and said, "I've written this report and I think you might find it interesting. I would be happy to give you a copy of this report if you would refer five people to my email newsletter."

The way you have to do that is to email them and ask them if it's okay and then send the report. This was when my list was quite small, maybe less than 1,000. Within about one week, I had 300 new subscribers. I increased my list by about a quarter or a third in just a week by offering this free report.

Since then, I've made it a little more sophisticated. I do it as an on-going campaign called "The Tell a Friend Campaign." You have to create a little form with a little coding on your website. I do it through my shopping cart program. It's called the "Tell a Friend Script."

Go to my page called "Spread the Word" by clicking on "Spread the Word," the top right link on my website. Then, there is another link that says, "Tell a Friend." All you have to do is put in a friend's email and name. Then an email will go out to them telling about *More Clients*.

I won't get those email addresses, so no privacy or Spam issues are involved. The person that tells the friends automatically gets redirected to a page where they get rewarded with a free teleclass in RealAudio. Anybody on this call and anybody that gets my eZine can say, "Okay. I've got three or four friends." Then, they put in the

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names. A couple of seconds later, they've got a free thing as a bonus.

You can do that as a very specific campaign that you put right in your eZine saying, "By the way, I'm trying to increase this. This is why. Just click here and when you tell a few friends, you'll get a free bonus of some sort."

I've found that to be very effective and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people have filled out that "Tell a Friend" form on my site. It's resulted in many, many, many new subscribers.

You've done similar things, right Bob?

Bob: Sure. If you were to look at an issue of my eZine, you won't see it on the back issues on my site because I strip off some of that information. The very first line in my eZine, before the title of the article or anything else says, "Tell your friends and business associates to subscribe at..." Then, it gives a link for them to click.

I do something similar to what Robert does, but I use a different vehicle. About twice a year, I have new subscription drive contests. I don't have a "Tell a Friend" on my site, but what I do is I'll hold the contest and I'll tell people, "I'm looking to increase the subscriber-base, but I really only want qualified subscribers. People who you know will really benefit from the content of this eZine. I'm going to hold a contest. Anyone who refers at least three people will get a free download of a valuable article." Then, I give them the article name.

The grand prize winner, the one person who refers the most new subscribers, will get a choice between one of my \$180 products or a half-hour free consultation with me. I like this method because it's a little more direct. I feel it

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gives me a lot of control. I don't always know how many people are going to the website or how many of my subscribers go back to the site. But, I know that most of them are going to be reading the eZine.

I get a big surge when I do this. Again, I only do it about twice a year because I don't want the quality of the referrals to go down. I don't want people referring a lot of people who really don't care. I also don't want to take up too much of their time with this.

People seem to appreciate it because they are getting compensated with the free report. In the issue after the contest is done, I always announce the winner of the grand prize and how many people subscribed due to that winner. People just like to see that information. It also helps them know that it was a valid contest.

Robert: Bob, I used a strategy like this, offline with a client several years ago. It's virtually the same thing. The only thing we're talking about here is doing it online and rewarding them for subscribers. In the case of this client, he was a tax preparer and we rewarded his clients for referring new clients. There was a reward for everyone that referred someone. The one that referred the most got a weekend getaway at an inn somewhere in Napa Valley.

He increased his client base dramatically. I think the first time he got something like 63 new clients with that strategy. That basic strategy has been around for a long time. It's just adapting it to the web. I'll bet when you do this, you probably get more than 63 subscribers. You get several hundred, right?

Bob: Absolutely.

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Robert: It's not a lot to ask from people. It's not a huge commitment. Some of those people ultimately will unsubscribe; don't worry about it. But, getting several hundred new subscribers will pay for itself many, many times over.

Bob, we're having some good ideas here. We've got two more major points to go and then we're going to open it up to questions.

The next one is setting up your website to be a subscriber magnet. This is a really important one because a lot of people will go to your website first. Then, they'll subscribe right there on the website. That's usually the main conduit; however, whether you pass the names along, ultimately they come to the website and go to a form.

When I was initially designing my site, I was reading everything, including stuff from you, Bob Serling. Way back when, in 1998 or something, I was trying to figure out every tip, idea and strategy I could think of to get more subscribers. What I was looking for was for every person who visited the website, the Home Page on the site; that a larger percentage would ultimately sign-up for the eZine.

One thing I did was to put a Subscribe button on every single page of the site, right under the navigation bar. That got a certain amount of results. Then I read something that said if you give something away for free you will increase your subscriber rate, dramatically. I said, "That seems like a no-brainer. Why didn't I think of that before?"

What I actually did was to take off the Subscribe buttons on every page and I concentrated them on the Home Page. If you go to my Home Page, there's actually three

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ways to link to that Subscribe button. There is a link under my navigation bar; to the left, there's a free stuff button at the top; and there's an icon link that says, "Get the 24-Page Marketing Plan Workbook," just under the text on the first page.

So, there are three links that all go to exactly the same page that subscribe to the eZine. What I do now, is instead of saying, "Subscribe to the EZine," I say, "Get Our Free Marketing Plan Workbook." I emphasize the giveaway more than the subscription.

I want you to understand how powerful this is. When I changed this, and it happened immediately, from "Get the Subscription" to "Get the Report," the rate of my subscriptions doubled overnight. Back then, I was getting about 15 subscribers a day. After that, I started to get about 30 a day and it never, ever decreased from that point.

Now, because I have more popularity, more eZines going out there, and more word-of-mouth, it kind of has a (inaudible) increase. Typically, I get about 60 to 100 new subscribers every single day. My rate of conversion is about one in five, or 20%. For every five people that go to the website, one person signs up for the eZine. That's a very high percentage.

People are usually happy if they get six, seven, eight or ten percent. I measure this simply because I have a web counter called [WebStat](#) (we'll put that in the Resource Guide as well). It's a great little tool. You simply put a counter on every single page and then you look at a web interface and you can see exactly which pages on the site people have gone to. I can see my visitor-to-subscriber ratio.

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If you just change that one thing, very often you can double your subscription rate overnight. I've seen it happen, over and over again. But you do need to have to, very clearly, point people to this page. And, you have to have a good name and write-up for the giveaway. Most of you signed up for the eZine, so you've seen that. But, you can go back to the site. Click on it, study it and see how I've done it. It really works well.

Now, Bob does something very similar. Why don't you tell them what you do, Bob.

Bob: Right. First of all, let me say that I completely agree with everything that Robert just said. Let me throw in a couple of additional points. One of the techniques that I've always talked about with clients was giving something away free. This is very, very popular in the direct marketing industry. The two biggest and most financially successful areas of direct marketing are health and financial services.

You'll see that the health newsletters and financial services newsletters that sell for \$100 to up to \$600 per year per subscription always sell you in by giving you a free issue or a free issue and a bonus report or something along that line. It works very well.

It's a technique called "sampling." Sampling is very effective. Originally, I gave away a free report; then I put together what I call my "Service Marketing Toolkit" that had three different and distinct offerings (it has again about at 16 to 20-page report called "Four Things You Can Do Today to Double the Sales of Your Services Tomorrow," and there's the Service Marketing Calculator that allows you to calculate how effective your marketing is in the areas of prospecting, sales, online, and referrals

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and then there's the subscription to my eZine and a link to the back issues).

I found that by increasing the perceived value of that package, two things happened. I immediately doubled the number of subscribers, but it also exponentially increased the perceived value of that package. You have to realize that not everybody wants that same thing. If you have three different things, and especially if they have different formats, one's a tool or a piece of software; one's a report; and one's the eZine and back issues. One of those three is going to stir somebody's interest enough to subscribe.

I've found that by packaging multiple components together it really increased the number of subscribers over offering just a single item such as a free report.

Robert: That's a great idea. What I added to mine was a free chapter of the "The InfoGuru Manual." I found that not only do people like that, as new subscribers, it sold more manuals. That was a good thing, as well.

Another little tip that I have for this is when you're signing up for this stuff, usually you're just using words such as, "Here's what we have. Here's what you get." You can make the intangible more tangible by putting a picture of what they are getting in a little icon that looks like a little book.

You'll notice if you go to my page, you have three icons. One is the icon for the *24-page Marketing Plan Workbook*; the other is the icon for the "The InfoGuru Manual"; and the other is the icon for the eZine, itself. It looks more substantial.

"Oh, I'm getting all of these three things." That increases the subscriber rate. There's a lot of little, subtle things

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that I've fine-tuned over the years that just keep the subscribers coming.

Any other tips there, Bob?

Bob: No. I think we've pretty well covered that.

Robert: It's extremely important. This is the thing you should do tomorrow on your website if you have a website because you can immediately increase the effectiveness.

Bob: Actually, there is one more point. We talked about having a package of items. That doesn't mean that you can't start today with one item. A free report is the easiest thing to put together. You can start immediately. You can put a report together in an hour to two hours and start where you are at.

You don't have to wait until you have all three. You can add things in later. You don't have to have three. You can have two. You can have four. But, the most important point is to start offering something of high perceived value in addition to your eZine, today. Start taking advantage of getting a lot more subscribers, right away.

Robert: One more point about that. It's so important because these days, people often won't subscribe to an eZine without a bonus. They are getting so many already and it's just another one. Why should they do it? Well, the bonus is what tips them over. They say, "Well, who knows, I might not even read the eZine or I might unsubscribe, but I'll at least get the bonus." The majority will stay subscribers and get some value from it.

The next one is how often to contact your list members. Should you do it monthly, bi-weekly, weekly, or every day? You get two or things from Joe Vitale every week on

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various things, I think. They are always somewhat different.

Why don't you start with that one, Bob? What are some of your thoughts as to the frequency of your email?

Bob: I have three words on this topic. Test, Test, Test. From having spoken to over 20 different experts, including Joe Vitale, Bob Bly, Robert Middleton and a number of others, in the last couple of months in putting together my new program, there's no greater difference of opinion on any topic than on this topic.

Different people get different results. Bob Bly swears by once a month. Joe Vitale puts out two, three, four, or five contacts a week. I have found that for my eZine, twice a month is what works most effectively. I know Robert publishes every week.

Robert: Every week; and once, sometimes twice a month I'll do a special stand-alone e-mailing to promote a teleclass or something like that. I generally get better enrollment in the teleclass if I do a separate email for it.

Bob: This has to be mitigated by two factors. 1) Your comfort and ease with writing. Some people find that it's just treacherous to have to write an issue. If that's the case, you might want to consider a longer publishing schedule, maybe just once a month.

Robert: And, getting an editor or some help. If this is stopping you from writing, get some help. It's worth the money you put into in the return on the back end.

Bob: If you need an editor, go to www.elance.com. That's where you'll find a lot of freelance service providers. You can get

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editing help absolutely dirt-cheap, often for as low as \$10/issue.

Robert: Really? You know, you can write a couple of pages of not very good stuff, the ideas are there but the language isn't great or you'll get a good editor and they'll make it look brilliant. You'll go, "Holy Cow! I wrote this?" – For a few bucks.

Bob: It's amazing. That's the one factor. The other factor, Robert already touched on, is how often you're going to be sending out other offers or announcements to your lists. Whereas, I only put out two issues per month, I put out at least two other stand-alone contacts per month. People are still hearing from me once a week.

Occasionally, I'll go a little more frequently than that. I've found that a maximum of once a week is what's most effective with a combination of my eZine and stand-alone promotions for products or services.

Robert: Let me give you another quick rule of thumb on this. If you are only selling the service, better to send less often. If you are selling online products, you can do it more often. I simply decided to do it more often for a very simple reason. Every time I sent out an email and mention a product, I got online sales.

I would literally send this out five times a day, if I could get away with it. But, I don't think I could. I think I'd get a lot of unsubscribes. You have to have some kind of a balance. If I could send out an email every time and no one unsubscribed and I got sales, you guys would get more emails from me than you could possibly believe. It would be silly not to do that.

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But, you have to find a balance. If you are just selling a service, a good informational article with a case study and a link to more information about your services is probably going to serve you very well.

One more topic – getting more traffic from the web to become subscribers. What are ways you can do that?

There is one technique here that we're really not going to cover and that is the whole issue of search engines, keywords, etc. That alone would take a whole teleclass, itself. It's trickier and trickier to do that because there is so much competition for keywords.

What I've done is optimize my website for the words "marketing plan." I did it early enough, I have enough links to my site and I have my page structured well-enough that I appear all over the place in the web. If you put in "marketing plan" in Google, AltaVista, Yahoo!, or MSN, I'm going to be in the first one to five listings. I can tell you exactly how I did that and you would do it and you wouldn't get up there because there are so many other subtle factors to it.

It's not a bad idea to put in keywords and try to optimize your best way. There is information all over the web on how to do that. There is even a chapter on it in "The Info Guru Manual." We're going to talk about some other things related to the web.

My favorite one is very simple – get articles published on the web. What this does is two main things. 1) If it's a high traffic site, or a site that gets some traffic, they'll read your article. There is always a link at the bottom, "For more articles on marketing for Professional Services businesses, please visit Action Plan Marketing." Then, there is a link they can click and find you.

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Hundreds and hundreds, if not thousands of people have found me through articles that I have out there on the web. The other way articles help you is by adding one more link out there on the web. Especially important in Google is to build your link popularity. If you have all of the right keywords placed in the right places in your website, you're still not going to appear high unless you have a lot of sites pointing to you.

If you look up on AltaVista how many sites are pointing to me, you'll find about 680. Some are articles; some are notices of various things; but still 680. That increases my link popularity. It's hard to bump me out of first place or third place position in Google. It's very hard to do because of that popularity.

That's the good news. The bad news is that it can be very time-consuming and arduous to simply get an article published on the web. First, you have to find a place that publishes articles. You can do all kinds of searches on articles in your particular field. Then, you have to submit it and they have to put it up. It can take from 15 minutes to an hour to get one article published.

After a while, people give up. The way most of my articles have been published is by people taking the articles from my recent eZine and publishing it on their website or in their eZine because at the bottom of every article, I give permission to publish my article as long as they have a link.

If you don't have a huge subscriber list, what do you do? I found a great new service; I'm not sure exactly how new it is, called www.ThePhantomWriters.com. I'll be sending you a link to that in the *Resource Guide*.

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You submit an article to The Phantom Writers. Then, they submit that article literally to thousands of sites that they have relationships with. They say the average number of eZines and websites that pick up your article is about 28 per article. They don't suggest you submit more than two articles per week. You can buy submissions in bulk for as low as \$15 an article to as high as \$24 to \$28 an article.

For almost no time, at all, you can submit an article and it can go out to hundreds and hundreds of places. If you write good articles on good topics that are relevant, you get placed in many, many places very quickly. I just discovered this when putting together this teleclass. I'm very impressed with how it is set-up and I'm going to be contracting for 60 placements of articles which could literally place me in 1,200 different places within a few months.

Anything to get my information out there, increase my link popularity simply can't hurt. It really won't cost me that much money. That's a great strategy. Do it yourself if you want, but it's very time-consuming. You might want to check out this resource, it's a really good one.

Bob, do you want to share a couple of ideas of getting traffic from the web?

Bob: Really quickly because we're a bit over the hour and I think we want to allow as much time as we can for questions. I do something similar, but it's not with an article. I have a couple of reports. I will email the owners of eZine lists and websites, I do this at Christmas and other times when I have an article that is relevant to a key issue in the news, and I'll say, "I have this report. Because it's Christmas, this would be a great gift to give to your subscribers."

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They put it in their eZine. Then, they post that eZine back-issued to their website. Now, my offer is going to be on their site for years to come.

For instance, if I were to write a report on the CAN Spam Act on Spam email, I could get dozens of site owners to offer that free report to their subscribers and to post it on their website. It would be there for years or until CAN Spam changed significantly. I would get a lot of exposure and a lot of links that way, as well. That's another variation of the same method.

You'll see that so many of these methods revolve around using a free sample of the valuable information you provide people.

Robert: Which is really the heart of "InfoGuru Marketing" – have information, give it away and get it out there. That will lead people back to you. That's essentially the strategy that I've used for years.

Hopefully people have some questions on things we haven't covered and things we have. We have a line open for questions. Who has a question?

Tina: Hi. This is Tina from Boston. My business is called www.workwelltogether.com. I'm very interested in using postcards placed in places like parking lots where there are businesses to deliver information about the site and invite people to sign up for the Tip Sheet. I'm wondering about your thoughts on that.

Robert: Postcards placed on cars?

Tina: Yes.

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Bob: Let me ask you this – I’m going to advise a technique I call Marketing to Yourself. How often do you respond to stuff you find stuck under your windshield as compared to just taking it and not even looking it, crumbling it up and tossing it?

Tina: I respond pretty often, particularly with something I need.

Bob: Okay. I would suggest that you are the exception rather than the rule on that. I also think that for services, you want a bit more of a dignified method of doing that. I don’t think it’s worth saving the mailing cost by placing them there. You can mail them bulk, third rate and you can find people in your local area. You can cover that whole area by mailing it.

You can mail just a few hundred at a time and you’re going to get greater readership because people always look at their mail. The beauty of a postcard is that people always look at both sides of it. They are going to get the gist of it. Sometimes they’ll put it aside to read it later. But, a lot people will read the whole thing right then. I would advise that method would be a lot more effective than placing the cards.

You also sometimes get into trouble with littering, when you do that. People throw them on the ground and you get people mad at you. You can even be contacted by the police to come clean it up or pay a fine.

Robert: We don’t recommend that. You can target a heck of a lot better with Direct Mail. There’s our answer for you. Okay, next question.

Cameron: Robert, this is Kamran Nasser from San Francisco. I have a quick question. How did you find out how many links you have to your website on AltaVista?

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Robert: In the search thing, you do “Link:” and then your complete web address with the http://www.etc... and it will show you have many links to your site. For some reason, AltaVista has a bigger database of sites than Google even though Google is more popular. You can actually find the number of links. Also, apparently, Google references the numbers of links in AltaVista to increase your link popularity. Go figure, it’s complicated.

Next question.

Jane: Hi, Robert, it’s Jane in Watford. I was wondering about the “Tell a Friend” thing, particularly when you are promoting it. How do you qualify who they are going to put on and make sure that the email addresses are actually valid?

Robert: The truth is that you can’t know. Someone can put in bogus email, what the heck. Don’t worry about it. Most people will be honest and put in the right email address. It’s just something that you can’t be concerned about. A lot of things, a lot of these little things stop us, “People won’t read it. People will think it was Spam. I sent out an easy to answer promotion and one person said you shouldn’t promote in my eZine so I think I shouldn’t do that.”

Believe what we’re saying on this call. We’ve got experience; we’ve made hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars doing this, and really think these things work. Don’t worry about those little things.

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Dan: This is Dan in North Carolina. My question is why would you use something like www.Aweber.com instead of the 1ShoppingCart.com email list? What are the advantages?

Robert: If you have One Shopping Cart, the email list manager for One Shopping Cart is quite good. I would recommend it, as well. When I started, the mailing list part of One Shopping Cart wasn't as good as it is now and I liked AWeber better. I just like AWeber. Sometimes you find a product that you're so loyal to, you just love it. I met the owners of AWeber at an Internet conference and I really feel I have a good relationship with them.

I actually have met the owners of 1ShoppingCart. So, what can I say? They're both very good.

Bob: Yes. I think the larger answer to that question is that it isn't a matter of one vs. another. It really gets down to what you're comfortable with. What a lot of other people are using that's effective. The point is it isn't pitting one against the other.

There are probably a dozen excellent solutions. Find the one that works the best for you and that you're the most comfortable with. Take a look at the services they offer. Almost all of them offer a demo. Spend 15 to 20 minutes with two or three and find the one you're most comfortable with.

Robert: Okay, next question.

Sean: Sean from Nottingham. I've been writing a newsletter that has really high value content. I haven't been doing any promotion yet. I'm just about to go over to that. Do you have any tips on how to introduce a promotion aspect within a newsletter without offending subscribers?

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Robert: Number one: Don't worry about offending subscribers. You want your promotion to be in good taste, not too much hype, not too over the top. If you start with, "Buy this incredible book. It'll absolutely blow things out of the water," that kind of nonsense – no one likes that. But, you can talk in an enthusiastic, low-key tone about what you have.

The first thing you have to do, Sean, is you have to come up with a product or a service that you want to promote and have a page on your website that will tell about it, completely. Simply say, "Recently, we put together a new program called the XYZ Program. This program is specifically for people of such-and-such and so-and-so. If you'd like to find out more, please click here." Something like that.

Very, very few people are going to object to it. Some people might say, "Well, I keep subscribing because he doesn't send any promotion." But, it obviously isn't going to do you a lot of long-term good if you never promote. Something Bob said the other day was that if people unsubscribe because they never respond to promotion, why do you want them as subscribers, anyway?

Don't worry about it. Start your promotion.

We've got time for a couple of more questions.

Participant: Any ideas about Google advertising? Is it worthwhile exploring that?

Bob: It is worthwhile but we didn't cover it because there are so many technical issues and because there are so many factors that are out of your control with search engine and Google marketing. There is such a steep learning curve. It works very well when you are very conversant with it. It

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works very poorly when you aren't. So the answer is, yes, it's worth looking into. But, it's beyond the scope of what we can cover, today.

Robert: It can definitely get your links through. Sometimes it can cost you a lot of money. You really have to know what you are doing and study it.

By the way, in Bob's program, "The Ultimate Guide to Selling Professional Services Online," one of the CDs and transcripts is with, probably, the world's top expert on Google Adwords. We're going to be giving you a special offer on Bob's program. Actually, let's mention that and then we'll do a couple of more questions before we wrap up.

Essentially, what we're going to do is credit \$25, the base cost of this teleclass, to his program. So, if you've done this program and paid for the program, then we'll take that price off his program, "The Ultimate Guide to Selling Professional Services Online." Don't worry about the link. I'll be sending you a link right after this along with the audio logo. You'll get it in about an hour and half, or so. Okay?

Bob: Let me just add one thing. In addition to that, just real quickly, the program features five leading experts; Robert, Bly, Don Crowser on pay-per-click marketing, myself and Joe Vitale. It covers dozens of proven techniques for effectively using websites, eZines, ebooks and pay-per-click advertising to sell a lot more of your products or services.

As Robert said, we're going to apply \$25, the base cost of this call, to the purchase of that. I'm also going to include, just for the people who are on this call or purchase the CD, a \$29 report that I offer. If you go to my website,

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you'll see that it costs \$29, and it's called "[Strategic Marketing Secrets – Eleven Ways to Outthink, Outmaneuver and Outsell your Competition in any Economic Climate.](#)"

That's just a little added bonus that I wanted to put in as a "Thank You" for everyone who participated in this.

Robert: Great. Thanks a lot, Bob. I'll send you the link to that when I send you the RealAudio and the *Resource Guide*. Okay, let's do a couple of more questions. We've got a little bit more space on the digital recording.

Virginia: Robert, this is Virginia Monte. Is it a good idea to advertise on others' websites to increase your subscriber list? They have directories such as the Easy Clean has, and I believe you did it, one time.

Robert: Yes. The answer is, maybe. I think in many cases if you get a few articles published, that can produce the same result for much less cost. However, there are some sites out there that are good. Let me tell you my simple strategy for determining this. It's so simple that nobody thinks about it.

You look at the directory; you call up five of them and say, "Did it pay for itself?" If everybody says, "I have no idea. I don't think so." Don't do it. If everyone says, "You know, I'm getting a lot of links and people are mentioning it. It's really good." Consider doing it.

Bob: The other thing to do is watch that eZine. If the same people are advertising over and over, you know it's paying. If it's different people all the time then it's not producing results for people.

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Robert: But, she's talking about advertising on a website vs. an eZine. Sometimes, an eZine ad can be more effective because it's more immediate. It goes right into the mailboxes of thousands of people. People can click on it; whereas, you don't know how many people are actually going to a directory online. It's usually substantially less than through an eZine.

But, buyers beware. You can blow a lot of money this way if you are not careful. Usually listings on a website are really expensive. Check out other people that have links and see what they think.

Okay. Let's do one more, final question, and then we are going to wrap up for the day.

Alan: Bob, this is Alan. What is your opinion once you get someone to link to your services online from the eZine? Do you feel like a really long letter works better or a shorter, bulleted version?

Robert: In other words, what should you put on the sales letter online that they link from?

Alan: Right. Do you find that a longer letter works better or bulleted letter?

Robert: I find that letters that are in prose and conversational work a lot better than bullet points. Whole bunches of bullet-points definitely don't work. That doesn't mean that you can't have a few short bullet points, here and there. Make it conversational, as if you were talking to someone.

Such as, "Thank you for visiting this site. You might have a concern, etc... Well, I've been working for the last X months to put together this. This is what it consists of."

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It's as if you were just talking to someone normally. That's the reading that people enjoy reading the best.

Look at the copy from my "The InfoGuru Manual" or for this course or anything else. Those are pretty good ones to emulate. Look at Bob's site at www.consulting-success.com and that's a good indication of copy that really works. Emulate that which is successful and you'll do better.

We can probably do a whole thing just on writing copy, at some point, Bob. It's a whole other art form and it's beyond on this topic.

Bob: Robert, I don't know if you remember, in my interview with you for the full program, you give about a seven-step recipe for creating web copy and it's just exceptional.

Robert: There's a lot of that stuff available. Anyway, we've covered a lot of things and hopefully we've given you some very specific tips that you can use right away to start growing your list. Thank you, Bob, for joining us and thank you everyone for coming on the line. Good luck to you. Thank you very much.

Bob: My pleasure. Thank you, Robert. Thank you, everyone.